

**[HED]** Brands and Moms are Finally Catching on to the Power of Live Streaming

**[DEK]** With viewership in the hundreds of millions, the reach of live video is bigger than ever.

**[HED]** Is Live Streaming the Key to Authenticity for Brands?

**[DEK]** From the "Chewbacca Mom" to the rise of eSports, streaming video is a powerful tool.

**[HED]** Have Live Streams Finally Entered the Mainstream?

**[DEK]** It's not just home spun viral stars like "Chewbacca Mom." It's also a powerful brandbuilder.

**[HED]** Live Video Creates Viral Stars and Builds Brands -

**[DEK]** From the "Chewbacca Mom" to the rise of eSports, streaming video is a powerful tool.

**[HED]** From Chewbacca Mom to Competitive Sports, Live Video Hits The Big-Time

**[DEK]** It's not just home spun viral stars like "Chewbacca Mom." It's also a powerful brandbuilder.

**[HED]** Live Video: A Powerful Tool for Brand-Building and Chewbacca Moms

**[DEK]** With viewership in the hundreds of millions, the reach of live video is bigger than ever.

By Joel Keller

Candace Payne was having a rough day and needed a laugh. She had time before picking up her kids from school, so she decided to return some yoga pants at a department store. Then she saw it: a Chewbacca mask. She bought it, not for her kids, but for the biggest *Star Wars* fan she knows: herself.

She went to her car, donned the laughing mask, and streamed the whole thing on Facebook Live. "I'm going to go live to show my other stay-at-home mom friends that before they see all these pictures on Instagram of my kids with my toy, I wanted them to know, 'Hey, it was mine first,'" Payne said.

As the icons for "Likes" and "Ha Ha" were floating across her phone's screen, she noticed a friend who never laughed at any of her previous live streams sent a "Ha Ha" and that made her laugh.

Only a few hundred people saw the video as it ran live, but soon that number stretched into the millions, turning Candace Payne into "Chewbacca Mom."

"I would refresh my browser and I would see it jump up from 250,000 views to 500,000 views within four minutes at one point during that next day," she said. Within days, she

was fielding media requests, meeting J.J. Abrams on *The Late Late Show* and being given a tour of Facebook headquarters.

### **The power of the share**

Payne's case may be extreme – as of August 2017, the video has been viewed more than 170 million times – but the power and reach of live video is undeniable. According to Koeppel Direct, 360 million of Facebook's 2 billion users actively use Facebook Live. Instagram Live, YouTube Live, Twitch, Live.ly and others all attract hundreds of millions of users, and Twitter has recently joined in with its own live video initiative.

The expansion of platforms has been a boon to companies that use extensive live streams, like ESL, which produces eSports tournaments worldwide. NewZoo estimates that eSports revenues overall will reach \$696 million this year.

"It allows our product to reach the broadest possible base of people, and they are different demographics," said Michal Blicharz, ESL's vice president of Pro Gaming.

Sports Illustrated cites a study by NewZoo that says that 22% of male millennials in the US watch eSports, by far the biggest demo. However, exactly what will pop with a live streaming audience is still a mystery.

Even the folks at Facebook are not sure why Payne's video went viral, as she found out when she visited their headquarters. "I believe they said that the greatest thing about this video is how organic it really was," she said. "It was just the power of the share."

After Payne's Chewbacca adventure, the next-most-watched Facebook Live video consists of a guy playing a Tears for Fears song on the dulcimer (97 million views).

YouTube Live's most-watched stream was a look into the pen of April, a giraffe at the Animal Adventure Park zoo in New York, in the weeks before she was to give birth (232 million views, 1.2 million at a time at its peak).

### **Dedicated fans**

While which videos go viral may seem random, having a dedicated fan base can ensure that a live event garners big numbers. Take, for instance, the live introduction of the 8<sup>th</sup> Generation Intel Core processor in August. The live stream, the first time Intel used the method to introduce a new product, attracted 400,000 live stream views and the on-demand shortened version of the videos got more than 3.7 million views combined, according to Gregory Bryant, senior vice president and general manager of Intel's Client Computing Group.

The new processor family is evidence that component makers, as well as telecoms and the platform providers themselves, are keeping live video in mind. To people like ESL's Blicharz, making sure everything runs smoothly is paramount.

"We are heavily relying on Intel for the rendering and the compression of the signal to be absolutely flawless in the highest possible quality. Because, any stutter there in the compression is literally delivering an imperfect product to the consumer, which is something that we dread," he said.

The gaming community has been among the pioneers in the live video arena, going back to the days when people would use YouTube to simply watch a screen share of someone playing something like *Grand Theft Auto*. But since Twitch and its live video streams launched in 2011, viewership has taken off, to the point where ESL-produced tournaments like Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) are attracting millions of live video viewers *and* arena-sized in-person audiences. Its recent tournament in Sydney, Australia, attracted over 8 million unique viewers.

"Suddenly, discovery of content was very, very easy," said Blicharz "You were not only reaching people that knew about ESL, but you were also reaching people that just liked gaming and wanted to watch something on a live stream. And it allowed us to tap into audiences we've never had a conversation with before."

"[Twitch] gave a centralized platform," said George Woo, Intel's eSport Marketing Manager. "That's when we started looking at the mass reach and really achieved our objectives from a brand perspective. Currently we've got over a hundred million plus active unique users on Twitch. ESports is a PC dominated market, so our brand fits naturally."

ESL's channel on Twitch has almost 2 million followers, and its Facebook page has 1.6 million likes. However, when they think about moving to any new live streaming platform, audience size is just one of the considerations.

"Twitch has a certain audience. Facebook has slightly different audience and a different way of discovering the content, and so does Twitter, and so does YouTube," said ESL's Blicharz. So, "the primary question is, is the platform ready and willing to support eSports and can we find consumers that would be an extension of our reach?" said Blicharz.

Engagement on Twitch and YouTube, where ESL's hardcore fans are, is higher than on Twitter and Facebook, but the sheer number of users and how they find content is hard to ignore.

## **What's next**

What will we see from live video in the next few years? Intel and ESL are working on that now, as the two have joined with Oculus to start the VR Challenger League. Participants will play virtual reality games like *The Unspoken* and *Echo Arena* and live streams will be made available to people who use Oculus' rift VR goggles.

"We want to continue to promote VR in public settings by experienced spectator views as well as having open tournaments, which we're doing now," said Woo.

As far as Candace Payne is concerned, she thinks that whole networks can be created from user-made live streams like her new talk show, which she'll post weekly to her over 800,000 Facebook followers.

"I honestly believe Facebook Live is a medium right now to restore the grittiness and the authenticity of what live is supposed to look like in the way that we're entertained," Payne said.

She also realizes that without the reach that the Chewbacca Mom video created, she would have never been able to write her book, *Laugh It Up! Embrace Freedom and Experience Defiant Joy*, which will be released on November 7. But she's just going to keep doing her thing.

"I continue to be myself and love on people," she said. "Whoever wants to follow can follow. The right people will be there."

And both brands and organizations are also hoping that when they live stream the right people will be there too.